



Scientific Advice Mechanism

Environmental and Health Risks of Microplastic Pollution

Stakeholder Meeting Report

**Stakeholder Meeting hosted by the Group of Chief Scientific
Advisors of the European Commission's
Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM)**

(25 April 2019, Brussels)

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25 April 2019, Van Maerlant Building, Brussels

MEETING REPORT¹

The purpose of this meeting was for the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors to present to stakeholder representatives the main lines of the recommendations around which its intended Scientific Opinion would be based, providing in the process the opportunity for comments and reactions.

To set the scene, the participants were presented with overviews of: the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM); the background for the work on the microplastics topic; and the findings in the SAPEA Evidence Review Report on the subject.

Twenty-four stakeholder representatives took part (see list at the end of this document).

The following is an unattributed synthesis of the main points raised in the discussion.

Stakeholders voiced overall appreciation for the work carried out on the topic by SAM and welcomed the main lines of recommendations of the Chief Scientific Advisors. There was general agreement on the need to reconcile the benefits of plastics with the imperative to protect the environment and health from plastic and microplastic pollution.

The discussion touched on the following aspects:

Definitions/ lack of knowledge, in particular on nanoplastics

- All those who commented, agreed that the absence of clear and precise definitions poses a significant problem.
- Stakeholders pointed out that the existence of different definitions for different regulatory sectors and regions complicates understanding and implementation of regulations. They welcomed any recommendation to clarify and simplify in this area.
- One concern was voiced about the lack of data/ detection methods for some polymers, and called for definitions to discriminate between intentionally added microplastic and microplastic which may simply be present as an impurity.
- From a risk assessment perspective, some suggested to focus on mass and concentration of particles, rather than size. Others pointed out that, due to the different sizes of particles, size should be considered as well in the definition of micro/nanoplastics.
- There was agreement on the lack of knowledge, in particular on nanoplastics. It was felt that policy makers need to be better informed and pay particular attention to nanoplastics, which may represent a greater risk to the environment and health. With this in mind, policy makers should also encourage more research in this field.

¹ See meeting agenda and list of participants at the end this document

Lack of harmonised methodologies for risk assessment

- Stakeholders welcomed a possible recommendation in this area.
- Some stakeholders shared information on on-going work on the harmonisation of research and test methods and on difficulties encountered to reconcile technical development needs and timelines with disconnected public opinion.

Global scientific platform and (access to) standardised data

- A possible recommendation on setting up a global scientific platform was welcome. It would allow better use of current scattered expertise, to cope with the rate of progress in the field and to enable access to and exchange of standardised data.
- This platform, which should ideally go beyond Europe, should involve all stakeholders and link existing networks, initiatives and skills (e.g.: International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA), work carried out by WHO, ECHA, JRC) in order to maximise cross-fertilization and minimise duplication.
- Industry involvement in this would be welcome under the condition that industry's knowledge/findings be published and verifiable.

Making the legislative process more adaptive to research results

- Challenges include those linked to the cyclical nature of policy making, the difficulty to deal with emergencies and the long lead-time for some legislative measures to show impact.
- Overstating problems was cautioned against. It was recommended to make best use of knowledge from social sciences to enable pro-environmental behavioural change.
- Not all necessary changes require legislative measures. The right balance needs to be found between legislation and voluntary measures by individual stakeholders (e.g.: the European Plastics strategy).
- Measures that are temporary, revisable or reversible as well as legislation which can be adapted in the light of new evidence, may sometimes be envisaged.

Complexity/priorities

- The appropriateness of end-of-pipe measures due to the high number of possible pathways was questioned. Some suggested focusing on upstream pre-market entry measures and the most important sources of microplastic pollution (tyres, textile fibres, pellets, roadmarkings) - a principle also anchored in the EU treaty, alongside the precautionary and the 'polluter pays' principles.

Importance of human behaviour and the use of evidence from social sciences

- There was agreement on the need to better inform citizens.
- For this purpose the usefulness of labelling to better indicate what products include microplastics was discussed inconclusively.
- It was deemed important to find ways to enforce pro-environmental behaviour.

Next steps

- In order to address the observed disconnect between state-of-the-art in science and the pressure of policy makers to address public concern, it was recommended to look at existing legislation, behavioural patterns and make a concerted effort to help policy makers to deal with media reports and the concerns of citizens.
- Efforts will continue with regard to implementing dissemination and follow-up activities, notably in the G7 context and in relation to other interests and opportunities which arise.

The meeting ended with the chair thanking all for their views and for giving of their time as well as acknowledging that the points made would help the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors in its final deliberations on what to include in its Scientific Opinion for the European Commission.

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Agenda

Stakeholder Meeting
Environmental and Health Risks of Microplastic Pollution

25 April 2019, 10:30 – 13:00

Venue: Salle Van Maerlant, Rue Van Maerlant 2, Brussels

Welcome coffee

10:00-10:30

25 April 2019, 10:30-13:00

Chair: Rolf Heuer, Chair of EC's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

1. Opening remarks and objective of meeting

Nicole Grobert, Microplastics topic co-leader and Member of EC's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

10:30-10:45

Part I – General background

2. SAPEA Evidence Review Report

- Bart Koelmans (Wageningen University), SAPEA Working Group Chair

10:45-11:00

3. Overview of potential messages in the Scientific Opinion

- Pearl Dykstra, Microplastics topic co-leader and Deputy Chair of EC's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

11:00-11:30

Part II – Discussion

4. Stakeholder comments and reactions on potential messages in the Scientific Opinion

11:30-12:45

5. Wrap-up of the meeting

12:45-13:00

- End of meeting -

Stakeholder Meeting

List of Participants

Environmental and Health Risks of Microplastic Pollution

Thursday, 25 April 2019 - 10:30 - 13:00 – Meeting Room VM-2 – 2nd floor

Van Maerlant Building, Rue Van Maerlant 2, Brussels

Stakeholders	
A.I.S.E. - International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products	Francesca Angiulli
CEFIC - European Chemical Industry Council	Nicolás Fuentes Colomer / Blanca Serrano Ramón
ECPA - European Crop Protection Association	Sebastien Bonifay
Cosmetics Europe	Diane Watson
ECETOC - European Centre for Ecotoxicology and Toxicology of Chemicals	Lucy Wilmot
EFFCI - European Federation for Cosmetic Ingredients	Clare Liptrot
EurEau - European Federation of Water Services	Bertrand Vallet / Oliver Loebel
EURATEX - European Apparel and Textile Confederation	Mauro Scalia
ETRMA - European Tyre & Rubber Manufacturers' Association	Susanne Buchholtz
EUMEPS - European Manufacturers of Expanded Polystyrene	Elisa Setien
EWf - European Wax Federation	Alexander Lichtblau
FOODDRINK EUROPE	Rebeca Fernandez
Fertilizers Europe	Leondina Della Pietra
IFRA Europe - International Fragrance Association	Nicole Vaini
IOGP - International Association of Oil & Gas Producers	Bernard Vanheule
Petcore Europe	Christian Crépet
PlasticsEurope	Charisiadou Stefania, Véronique Fraigneau
Polyelectrolyte Producers group	Denis Marroni
European Federation of Bottled Waters	Nizar Benismail
EUROCOOP - European Community of Consumer Co-operatives	Rosita Zilli
Plastic Soup Foundation	Madhuri Prabhakar
Surfrider Foundation Europe	Gaëlle Haut

EFSA - European Food Safety Authority	Marta Hugas
WHO - European Environment and Health Task Force	Dorota Jarosinska
Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM)	
Chief Scientific Advisors	Pearl Dykstra, Nicole Grobert, Rolf Heuer, Elvira Fortunato
SAPEA	Bart Koelmans, Hannah Whittle
DG RTD.02 (SAM Unit)	Johannes Klumpers, James Gavigan, Dulce Boavida, Annabelle Ascher
EC Observers	
DG ENV B.1	Paulo Da Silva Lemos
DG ENV B.2	Sylvain Bintein
DG ENV B.2	Andrej Kobe
DG ENV B.3	Bettina Lorz
DG GROW D.2	Fleur Van-Ooststroom-Brummel
DG GROW D.1	Gert Roebben
DG GROW D.4	Petra Cadova Leroy
DG GROW C.4	Mehdi Hocine
DG GROW F.4	Marco Manfroni
DG JRC - Geel F.6	Andrea Held
DG JRC - Ispra D.1	Elisabetta Balzi
DG MARE A.1	Maris Stulgis
DG RTD E.5	Tuomo Karjalainen
DG RTD F.2	Silvia Maltagliati
DG RTD F.5	Ivan Conesa Alcolea
DG SG E.2	Emilien Gasc
DG RTD I.2	Pavel Misiga
DG RTD I.2	Hans-Christian Eberl